



WILEY

Review

Author(s): L. L. Price

Review by: L. L. Price

Source: *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Sep., 1891), pp. 565-570

Published by: Wiley on behalf of the Royal Economic Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2956124>

Accessed: 26-06-2016 10:00 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Royal Economic Society, *Wiley* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to
The Economic Journal

REVIEWS

Labour and Life of the People. Volume II. London *continued*.
Edited by Charles Booth. London : Williams and Norgate,
1891.

In the concluding section of the second instalment which Mr. Booth has now given to the public of his vast undertaking, he remarks that at an early stage in his work, when asked by one from whom he sought information, 'What is the good of it all?' he had to admit that he 'walked in faith.' This attitude of mind had changed but little when he reached the end of his first volume, although he had by that time arrived at the conclusion that the *crux* of the problem of London poverty consisted in the elimination of his Class B, or, as he describes it more fully, the class of the very poor—casual labour, hand-to-mouth existence, chronic want. The conclusion of a second volume, he now tells us, 'leaves his position unchanged.' An extension of the area of inquiry from East London to the whole of London has enlarged the wilderness of figures, but has not done much to make the path more clear.

If Mr. Booth will allow us on behalf of economists and statisticians to venture upon an answer to the inquiry of his questioner, we should say that in the first place he had furnished a model of statistical investigation. Professor Marshall, if we remember rightly, in introducing Mr. Booth at the meeting of the British Association at Leeds last year, observed that anyone who wished to discover what was the most important, the largest and the most successful statistical inquiry which was being undertaken in England would look not so much to any department of government or public association as to a private individual in the person of Mr. Booth. There are few, if there are any, economists or statisticians, who would not be inclined to lend, if possible, greater emphasis to Professor Marshall's eulogy. The vastness of the undertaking in which Mr. Booth is engaged is not more conspicuous than the success with which from the point of view alone of the mere statistician and economist his efforts have been attended. He

modestly speaks of a 'wilderness' of figures; but it would be more correct to say that he has opened out a path through what was a 'wilderness' before. A reference to the maps which accompany the present volume will suffice to show the admirable results of his patience and enterprise; and, if he has done nothing else, he has at least presented a pattern of the way in which facts and figures should be collected and arranged in an intelligible order. Nor is this any inconsiderable achievement. It is a trite observation to say that a malady must be correctly diagnosed before a remedy can be successfully applied; but the familiarity does not detract from the truth of the maxim, or from the appropriateness of the analogy to social science. In the infancy of the Royal Statistical Society, the motto adopted was a sheaf of corn encircled with the badge '*aliis exterendum*,' though it is true that the Society had not existed very long before the badge was removed. In the same way Mr. Booth himself, after describing the condition of the people of Central and South London, grouped according to their trades, in his next volume, and, after taking stock of all that is now being done to remedy the condition of the poor by means of existing agencies, hopes to turn his own attention again to the consideration of what should be the way or ways of solving the problem. In this sense of the words of the motto we have quoted he is naturally not going to be content to leave the 'thrashing out' of his figures to others; but, even as it is, he has not merely collected, but he has already gone far to thrash out his figures by the remarks which accompany them. And yet, had he done no more than merely collect and arrange the figures, he would have successfully achieved a most important and a most difficult piece of statistical work; he would have justly earned the repute of a statistician of the first rank; and he would have formed a correct diagnosis of the disease.

To criticise his book is as unnecessary as it would be impertinent; for its success has been recognised on all sides. But we may endeavour to ascertain some of the reasons for that result; and they may perhaps be conveniently summarised under two heads. On the one hand such uncertainty had previously prevailed, and there had been such mistaken ideas of the extent and the nature of London poverty; and Mr. Booth has shown on more than one point that previous diagnoses were either based on inadequate evidence, or were positively misleading and mischievous. This was perhaps the case more with his first volume than with his second; but it is probably new to many of his readers to find that it is not so much East as South London which enjoys an unenviable pre-eminence in poverty; and we may perhaps say that on the whole the extent of irremediable poverty is shown, despite of proportions which are sufficiently serious, to be less than was previously imagined. In comparison, then, with what had been known or imagined before, Mr. Booth's work appears immeasurably superior, and its success may be partly attributed to this cause.

But the more important reason for that result is the absolute, and

not merely the relative, merit of his work. The quality by which above all it is characterised is its unimpeachable honesty. There is no desire either to overstate or to understate the facts: the palpable wish of Mr. Booth himself, and of all who have aided him, is to ascertain and to present the truth. He is ready at every opportunity to lay bare the method of investigation which has been pursued; and in this volume he supplies exact copies of specimen pages from the note-books used. The primary sources of his information have been the School Board visitors; and his calculations are based on the assumption, as explained in his first volume, that as is the condition of families with school children, so on the whole will be that of the entire population, or, so far as there is any difference, better rather than worse. He follows in the present volume the same division of the population into eight classes, of which A, B, C and D, represent those in 'poverty,' and amount for all London to some 30 per cent., and E, F, G, and H comprise those in 'comfort,' and amount to some 69 per cent. Of the first four classes, A, which is the lowest and consists of 'loafers and semi-criminals,' only accounts for some .9 per cent.' and B for 7.5 per cent. These results indicate an increase of 6 per cent. of poverty over those previously obtained for East London alone; and for the difference 'South London and the district about Holborn are mainly responsible.' An area with about 33,000 inhabitants lying between Blackfriars and London Bridge has close upon 68 per cent. of poor; and, whatever method of comparison we adopt, 'at every point South London takes the lead in this miserable competition.'

In extending his inquiry from East London to the whole Metropolis, Mr. Booth states that his method of investigation has been so far altered as to take the street as the limit rather than the family, and to postpone for the most part the question of occupation to a subsequent volume. The streets are classified, and coloured on the maps in various shades, according as their inhabitants belong in the main to the different classes. The colour black on these maps corresponds to A, dark blue to B, light blue to C and D, purple to C and D with E and F, and a mixture of B, pink to E and F, with a proportion of G, red to middle-class families with one or two servants, and yellow to the wealthy. It is in this classification of streets that the thoroughness of Mr. Booth's inquiry is perhaps most evident; for after, the particulars given in the note-books had been utilised, and the classification had been 'revised' by his secretaries, who 'walked over the whole ground,' and by the School Board visitors, it was then referred to the relieving officers, and to the agents of the Charity Organisation Society; and the police were consulted with regard to the black streets, and the clergy and district-visitors with reference to 'most of the poorer parts.' Descriptions are given with considerable and interesting detail of samples of the various streets, in most cases under feigned names, and these are followed by tables in which the sample streets, with the exception of those coloured black, are 'arranged according to the proportion found in them

of classes A and B, plus half of C and D,' and an attempt is made to show how far the poverty thus revealed is connected with widowhood, sickness, old age, intemperance, irregularity, or want of work. In Chapter IV. of this part of the volume, which is entitled 'London Street by Street,' the question of model dwellings is brought under review in a similar manner; and Miss Octavia Hill contributes a suggestive section on their 'influence on character.' She thinks that it is more difficult to deal with the 'undisciplined and untrained' in model blocks than in individual houses, and that in the latter case there is more hope of bringing these classes by degrees to a better mode of life.

Part II. of the volume before us is devoted to Central London as Part III. is to South and outlying London, &c. Of Central London full particulars of occupation as well as of class were, Mr. Booth states, obtained on the same plan as for East London and Hackney; and here, as in the case of Battersea, he was able to avail himself of the labours of other inquirers. In Central London there is apparently 'no such evident utter poverty among those who seek to lay out their money to best advantage' in buying from the stalls in the streets as in South or East London. The people are said to be 'more conscious.' 'If they are bad, they know it; if they are poor, they feel it more.' Points of comparison between the conditions of tailoring and boot-making in East and in Central London are shown in Chapter II. by the editor, a working tailor, and Miss Collet; in Chapter III. a graphic description is furnished of Covent Garden, which corresponds to the docks as the resort of casual labour and the scene of irregular employment; in Chapter IV. an account is given of common lodging-houses, from which it appears that they are urgently in need of stricter regulation and registration, and more efficient inspection; in Chapter V. the question of homeless men is discussed; and in Chapter VI. the editor compares Central London with other districts.

In Part III. 'South London and various outlying parts' are handled with similar thoroughness, but our limits of space permit us to do little more than give a bare analysis of its contents. But no more than this is really needed, for there are few economists who will be content to deprive themselves of the opportunity of consulting Mr. Booth's pages for their own information and instruction; and the detail contained in them is so great, and the treatment so exhaustive, that they scarcely admit of any analysis which will do them thorough justice. South London poverty, it seems, is chiefly concentrated in the neighbourhood of the river, and diminishes as we recede from its banks. There is a 'lack of spontaneous social life among the people,' which is 'perhaps due to the want of local industries.' Despite of religious activity, of energetic local government, of 'wholesale displacement of old insanitary property by improved dwellings,' 'there is something wanting;' and 'there is altogether less going on.' Battersea receives a chapter to itself in this section of Mr. Booth's work; and here he incorporates the results of a separate inquiry made on his

lines by Mr. Graham Balfour. The district has grown enormously in population, and the occupations of its inhabitants are of almost every kind; but 'between the locality and its inhabitants there is as a rule no association nor necessary connection.' 'Most of them live in it only because it is within reach of their work.' In Chapter III. Mr. Argyle gives a description of some outlying parts of London, and, amongst them, a detailed account of the growing district of Walthamstow. In Chapter IV. Mr. Llewellyn Smith continues from the first volume his study of the influx of population, and reinforces the conclusions at which he there arrived. The influx from the country into London is in the main a definite 'economic movement,' caused partly by the 'development of means of access,' and partly by the 'increasing relative advantages of town life,' and one of these advantages is that 'much of necessary town-work cannot be efficiently done by town-bred people.' The countrymen come as a rule not, as is often supposed, 'vaguely in search of work,' but 'definitely in pursuit of a known advantage.' They settle in the growing parts of London rather than in the overcrowded districts of the East and Central London; and the 'absolute low water-mark of immigration is in Bethnal Green,' 'almost coincident with the area' 'lately condemned' by the London County Council. Mr. Smith's chapter affords an apt illustration of the way in which Mr. Booth's book serves to correct previous impressions based on inadequate evidence; and he shows that the 'major part of London poverty and distress is home-made and not imported from outside.'

In Part IV. the subject of London children is considered, and the condition of elementary and secondary education examined. The results obtained from the School Board visitors, which form the primary basis of inquiry for the whole of Mr. Booth's investigations, are here subjected to the further test of statistics gathered from the teachers. The schools in each district have been classified, and 'specimens' chosen for thorough examination, while the others have been treated 'in a more general way,' though in each case an 'estimate' has been obtained of the 'percentage of each class of children found in each school.' The teachers return a larger estimate of the poverty of London. Class A from .9 becomes 1.3 per cent. B from 7.5 becomes 10.5 per cent. C and D become 33.2 from 22.3 per cent. Mr. Booth does not, however, think that these results impeach the trustworthiness of his previous figures, which have been more thoroughly tested and more carefully obtained. But the additional figures, he is of opinion, at least do not 'lighten the colours' in which the poverty of London has been painted.

With Part IV. the second volume concludes; but a supplementary volume contains the maps and the tables in which the figures are given on which the colouring of the maps is based, together with a table showing the birthplaces of London residents born in other parts of the United Kingdom, which is employed by Mr. Llewellyn Smith as the

foundation of a map appended to his article on the Influx of Population. We have now endeavoured to give in as small a compass as possible an analysis of the contents of the volume before us; and we think that such a summary is perhaps the best evidence that we can furnish of that honest thoroughness which we previously stated was the chief cause of the success of Mr. Booth's endeavours. In taking leave of it, we can only look forward with increased expectation to the next instalment, and again congratulate the Editor on what he has already achieved. If his future success at all corresponds to that with which he has accomplished what might before he had engaged in the enterprise have seemed hopeless, he will, we venture to think, have reason to rest in the sight of that goal to which he says he is now walking by faith.

L. L. PRICE

Trade Unionism, New and Old. By GEORGE HOWELL, M.P.
London: Methuen & Co., 1891.

FEW, if any writers, have done more than Mr. Howell to acquaint students of economics and the general public with the aims and opinions, the constitution and working, and the past history and present condition of trades unions. He may fairly claim, as he does in the volume before us, to have contributed to produce the change which has of recent years passed over public opinion with regard to these associations. In his *Conflicts of Capital and Labour* he has given a full account of some of the largest and oldest trades unions, and the fifth and sixth chapters of the present volume contain, in a clear and concise form, what may be described as a summary statement of some of the more valuable parts of his larger book. He describes the administration and government of the leading unions, and enumerates their various provident benefits. The figures with which he illustrates his account are of recent date—in many instances more recent than those supplied in the last report of the Labour Correspondent of the Board of Trade—and they bring into strong relief the friendly-society side of trades unions, which Mr. Howell will not allow to be exclusively either more or less important than the other or trade-society side. The account, again, which he gives of the past history of trades unions is, here, as in his larger book, lucid and instructive; and, although the more recent investigations of historical researchers have tended to throw doubt upon some of the conclusions of Dr. Brentano, upon whom Mr. Howell relies as his chief authority, this consideration applies rather to the earlier stages of that history—and especially to the relations between the craft and the merchant guilds—than to that later period of the rise and progress of combinations, which is the more important for Mr. Howell's purposes, and is discussed by him in his third chapter. The early period of the organisation of labour is reviewed in two chapters, one on the guild system, and the other on state regulation.